Necessities of Life

Feathers, especially eagle feathers, were highly prized, and red paint, prepared from ochre, as well as other paints obtained through the trader, played their part in bodily decoration.

The younger men thought a great deal of their appearance. One of the things they made for themselves was fancy painted sunshade-hats of rawhide. The designs painted thereon had a yellow background against which various other colors stood out. Coming Daylight remarked: "These sunshades looked so fine that the other tribes copied them, just like the whites get their styles from Paris." Long thick hair was the ideal both for men and for women. The tail of the porcupine made an admirable comb. A number of perfumes were used by the young men. The castor of the beaver, for instance, was put in the paint bag so that the material for daily painting would be sweet smelling. Again, young men crushed "Piegan berries," chewed them, and rubbed them on hair, horses, and bedding, as perfume.

Incidentally, according to Coming Daylight, in order to clean their buckskin clothing, the Gros Ventres would wear it into the water, getting it completely wet, and then rub it thoroughly with a certain kind of white clay.[14] She said that the tribe was spoken of by other tribes as always having such nice white clothes, and to this habit of rubbing them with clay she attributes the name by which the Gros Ventres call themselves, *a'aninin*, "white clay people."

Ear-rings, worn both by men and women, were made from imported abalone shell, which they cut up and shaped; they also used a certain type of imported white shell. Many other kinds of necklaces, armlets, and so on were apparently used, but on these we failed to get details.

Household and Transportation

The lodges of the Gros Ventres were made from buffalo hides, the number used in each depending on the size of the lodge. They

[14] This custom is mentioned in the sources of the early 19th century. Cf. Harmon, p. 277; Henry, v. 2, p. 734. The latter adds, as a further distinguishing characteristic, that when the Gros Ventres use red "it is always of a light color, inclining to pale vermillion. The dark red or Spanish brown, so much in vogue among the other Meadow tribes, does not suit their taste."